



Technology Strengthens Rural Economies

Over the past 10 years, TOP has awarded 255 grants to rural communities. These investments include projects that focus on economic development, foster entrepreneurial and sectoral networks, provide job training, map assets to attract new private investment, and help companies find new markets.

Greene County (Snow Hill, North Carolina) is using dedicated and strategically located wireless broadband hot spots to increase agricultural and non-agricultural entrepreneurial opportunities, job training, and professional development. Their deployment of a new mesh canopy will provide last mile connectivity to assist the region as it moves from an agricultural to an informational economy.

The Jubilee Project (Sneedville, Tennessee) is assisting small businesses in the specialty food sector in the remote counties of Eastern Tennessee. The project provides the business owners with state-of-the-art laptop computers, and is creating a collaborative online toolkit that includes calendars, production schedules, order fulfillment, inventory, market data, and financial management capacities.

Nebraska CyberSeed (Omaha, Nebraska) enables rural residents to engage in electronic commerce and telework leading to more business options for rural Nebraskans, higher quality jobs for rural workers, and a higher per capita income for participants. This project will result in a technology plan for the state that will assist rural residents to develop new opportunities and new markets for their skills.

The e-Plaza Project (Santa Fe, New Mexico) is developing a web-based solution for improved communication, information sharing, and collaboration for northern New Mexico's isolated rural agricultural communities. The system will increase linkages among the producers and market partners, leading to joint production and increased market share.



Minnesota Rural Partners (Redwood Falls, Minnesota) is providing rural entrepreneurs a virtual small business incubator and portal called BizPathways that links them with potential partners and advisors. The project is also designed to aggregate demand for telecommunications infrastructure development in the state's rural communities. It serves as a catalyst for small business providers to work together to improve the business environment.

Montana District Export Council (Silver Bow, Montana) is another virtual incubator project. It focuses on providing small business owners with training on how to access useful databases; locate partners and sales leads; market their products globally; and access banking, accounting, order fulfillment, freight forwarding, and other services essential to domestic and international trade.